

Why the Reid Technique® Method Continues to be the Most Effective Means Available to Learn the Truth

One of the fundamental precepts of the Reid Technique is to use sound reasoning, understanding and empathy to motivate subjects to tell the truth. John Reid started using this approach over 70 years ago and it is as effective today as it was then.

John Reid was a visionary who was ahead of his time. He demonstrated the effectiveness of treating people, even those who have committed heinous crimes, with decency and respect. John Reid tried to see the good in all people and tried to understand why they would commit their crimes. John had the patience and insight to understand the pre-existing thought process of others and he was able to use this insight to make an emotional connection with a subject and gain a level of trust and understanding that made it possible for him to engage in the art of persuasion to motivate even the most hardened criminal to tell the truth.

John developed a systematic approach that would protect the innocent, identify the guilty and motivate the guilty to want to tell the truth. He did this without the use of threats or promises of leniency. He did it by tapping into pre-existing rationalizations that originated in the mind of the suspect. John's understanding of human behavior allowed him to empathize with those who made bad decisions and committed a variety of crimes.

Today there are critics who have a very shallow understanding of the psychology of the Reid Technique and create a false narrative by suggesting that the inappropriate tactics used by investigators over the years are part of the Reid method....nothing could be further from the truth, as illustrated by our core principles:

- Always conduct interviews and interrogations in accordance with the guidelines established by the courts
- Do not make any promises of leniency
- Do not threaten the subject with any physical harm or inevitable consequences
- Do not deny the subject any of their rights
- Do not deny the subject the opportunity to satisfy their physical needs
- Always treat the subject with dignity and respect
- Do not conduct excessively long interrogations
- Exercise caution when interrogating juveniles, suspects with a lower intelligence or suspects with mental impairments

For over seventy years through our training programs John E. Reid and Associates has been providing investigators with the techniques and skills necessary to conduct effective investigative interviews and interrogations.

We have listed a number of facts regarding the Reid Technique® method for your review:

- When investigators follow the core principles of the Reid Technique they significantly minimize the possibility of a false confession. It is when investigators do not follow these core principles that they risk obtaining a false confession.¹
- There are good interrogations (which adhere to all of the guidelines established by the courts – the Reid Technique) and there are bad interrogations that do not.²
- Several courts have admonished investigators because they **did not** follow the guidelines we have recommend for the questioning of juveniles and mentally impaired individuals.³
- The courts consistently uphold the core elements of the Reid Technique. We have listed 60 cases for your review.⁴
- Our interview and interrogation techniques have developed and been enhanced considerably over the last 70 years.

Our book, Criminal Interrogation and Confessions, has expanded significantly from the original text to our current edition, which includes chapters entitled *Initial Precautionary Measures for the Protection of the Innocent*, *Precautions when Evaluating Behavior Symptoms of Truthful and Untruthful Subjects*, and *Distinguishing Between True and False Confessions*.⁵

- Numerous international research studies have been conducted on the core elements of the Reid Technique - including research from Japan, Korea, Spain, Canada and the US, including the High Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG). All of the studies establish the validity of various core elements of the Reid Technique.⁶
- *“There’s a lot of gold in the Reid interrogation manual and on reid.com and we really really encourage you guys to go up there and cite that material.”*

This statement was made by Attorney Laura Nirider at the National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys conference, in the context of using Reid as the standard for proper interview and interrogation procedures.⁷

- The Innocence Project has asked us on numerous occasions to assist them in identifying inappropriate interrogation techniques. Attorney Steve Drizin from Northwestern University Law School has also asked for our assistance (Robert Davis case).⁸
- The Reid Technique always begins with a non-confrontational investigative interview. This has been the case for decades.

In the 1967 edition of their book, Criminal Interrogation and Confessions, when discussing how to approach and question a subject regarding possible involvement in the commission of the crime under investigation, the authors, Reid and Inbau, recommended that the investigator “assume a neutral position and refrain from making any statement or implications one way or the other until the subject discloses some information or indications pointing either to his innocence or his guilt.” They then go on to detail the content of the interview process.

We have extensively expanded the content of the interview process over the years.⁹

- Interrogation only occurs when the investigative information indicates the subject’s probable involvement in the commission of the crime. While all subjects in an investigation will be interviewed, very few are actually interrogated. The purpose of an interrogation is to learn the truth.
- As a result of the rapport developed with the subject during the non-confrontational interview, the investigator begins the interrogation (when appropriate) by advising the subject of the investigation results – the foundation of the Reid Technique is empathy and understanding.¹⁰
- The Reid Technique has built in safeguards to protect the innocent and verify the authenticity and validity of admissions of guilt.¹¹
- In *U.S. v. Jacques* the court rejected testimony that the Reid Technique was in any way coercive, stating: “In sum, the proffered expert testimony to the effect that the Reid technique enhanced the risk of an unreliable confession lacked any objective basis for support whatever. Although Professor Hirsch insisted that “there is a wealth of information about the risks of the Reid technique,” he could point to none.”¹²
- False confession critics oftentimes misrepresent the Reid Technique method, attributing to the technique procedures that we actually teach not to do, such as promising lesser punishment if the subject confesses or harsher punishment if they do not.¹³
- From our graduates:

"Your efforts in this area make our nation a better place to live. "

“Thank you for the most valuable tool in my cop toolbox.”

“You gentlemen truly are an important asset in the Global War on Terrorism.”

“Your work has done more to bring about professional policing in America than all other law enforcement advancements in the past 30 years.”

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

¹ Some false confession critics and Reid competitors attempt to sell the narrative that false confessions are the result of misuse of the Reid Technique. In fact, false confessions are caused by investigators engaging in behavior that the courts have deemed coercive, such as threatening inevitable consequences; making a promise of leniency in return for the confession; denying a subject their rights; conducting an excessively long interrogation; etc. [Click here for court decisions highlighting improper investigator behavior.](#)

² [Click here for the article](#)

³ *People v. Elias* and *US v Preston* [Click here for the case details](#) (see page 9)

⁴ [Click here for the court decisions](#)

⁵ [Click here for details](#)

⁶ [Click here for details](#)

⁷ [Click here for Attorney Nirider’s complete statement](#) (See 06/05/2017 entry)

⁸ [Click here for details](#)

⁹ John E. Reid and his colleague, Northwestern Professor of Law Fred E. Inbau, developed the non-confrontational interview as an integral part of any questioning of a suspect.

The following excerpts are from the second edition of their book, Criminal Interrogation and Confessions, published in 1967 (the first edition was published in 1962 but was revised after the US Supreme Court’s 1966 decision, *Miranda v. Arizona*).

When discussing how to approach and question a subject regarding possible involvement in the commission of the crime under investigation, the authors recommend that the investigator “assume a neutral position and refrain from making any statement or

implications one way or the other until the subject discloses some information or indications pointing either to his innocence or his guilt.”

In conducting this non-confrontational interview the authors state, “The subject must be questioned and engaged in conversation in order to permit the [investigator] to study his behavior and conduct, to search for significant remarks or contradictions in his statements, and to check his statements in the light of known facts and circumstances.”

Reid and Inbau suggested that the following questions should be part of this interview:

- Ask the subject if he knows why he is being questioned
- Ask the subject to relate all he knows about the occurrence, the victim, and possible suspects
- Obtain from the subject detailed information about his activities before, at the time of, and after the occurrence in question
- Ask the subject if he ever thought about committing the offense in question or one similar to it
- Ask the subject whether he is willing to take a lie-detector test

These guidelines and questions developed into what is today an integral part of the Reid Technique - the Behavior Analysis Interview.

In all investigations we teach to conduct a non-accusatory, non-confrontational Behavior Analysis Interview with each subject to determine whether or not an interrogation is appropriate.

The 5th edition of Criminal Interrogation and Confessions includes 6 chapters that address various aspects of the interview process. [Click here for the Table of Contents](#)

¹⁰ [Click here for the article](#)

¹¹ See Criminal Interrogation and Confessions, in particular Step 8 [Click here](#) and Reid Best Practices ([Click here](#))

¹² [Click here for details](#) (See page 22)

¹³ In *State v. Tapke* the Court of Appeals of Ohio upheld the defendant's confession which was obtained by an officer who was trained in the Reid Technique. Dr. Richard Ofshe testified about false confessions and attempted to describe The Reid Technique as coercive. The jury subsequently rejected his testimony.

It is interesting to note that in his testimony Dr. Ofshe testified that as part of The Reid Technique interrogators are taught the following:

"So what police have learned to do is to communicate the message through a series of suggestions... the idea being to communicate the understanding that there's a deal on the table, but without ever explicitly saying here's the deal." He used the example of a person accused of GSI. He testified that the police would say something like this to a suspect: "[Y]ou're not a sexual predator; you're someone who needs treatment. What would you rather do, go to prison as a sex offender, or get some therapy in treatment."

It is interesting to note that the exact opposite is the case - we teach not to make any statements that refer to punishment, threats or promises of leniency and in our training seminars we highlight the case, *Commonwealth v. DiGiambattista*, in which the Massachusetts Supreme Court indicated that "what seemed to disturb the Court the most was the apparent reference to counseling which they felt "implicitly suggested to him that "counseling" would be an appropriate avenue for him to pursue after making a confession." In other words, if he confessed he would get counseling instead of jail." **This is exactly what we teach not to do.**

[Click here for the complete decision](#)